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General Field Notes

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Cover: Least Bittern, 27 June 2013, Bear Island Wildlife Management Area, SC. Photo by Jim Guyton.

General Field Notes briefly report such items as rare sightings, unusual behaviors, significant nesting records, or summaries of such items.

First, second, or third sightings of species in either state must be submitted to the appropriate Bird Records Committee prior to publication in The Chat.

A Review of Winter Wren (*Troglodytes hiemalis*) Breeding Records from the Southern Appalachians

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In the southern Appalachian Mountains, the Winter Wren (*Troglodytes hiemalis*) is an uncommon to locally common resident of high-elevation coniferous and deciduous forests, especially during the breeding season in the red spruce (*Picea rubens*)-Fraser fir (*Abies fraseri*) forest community above 1520 m (Pearson et al. 1942; Burleigh 1958; Potter et al. 1980; Robinson 1990; Simpson 1992; Stedman 1997; Rottenborn and Brinkley 2007; Holzman 2010). Although there have been numerous reports of fledged young, juveniles, and adults carrying food in the southern Appalachians since the late 1800s, only a few active nests of this species have been found or documented in the region. This article is a review of all Winter Wren breeding records from the southern Appalachians which have come to the attention of the author.

Historical nesting records from the Southern Appalachians

Southwest Virginia. In the mountains of southwest Virginia, Bert Williams discovered a nest with six fresh eggs at Mountain Lake (elevation ca. 1180 m) on Salt Pond Mountain in Giles County on 25 May 1915 (Clapp 1997). It was placed 1.3 m off the ground in a dead American chestnut (*Castanea dentata*) stub.

Joshua F. B. Camblos found a second nest with five fresh eggs on 22 June 1933 about 3 km southwest of Big Stone Gap (possibly ca. 800 m) in Lee County (National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution, Division of Birds, Collection No. 48124; Smithsonian Institution Archives, Accession No. 13-235, Camblos, Joshua F. B., Field Books, 1932-1939). This nest was placed among the roots of a large fallen oak (*Quercus* sp.) and according to Camblos was "quite a collection of small twigs, weed stems, grasses and rootlets, as well as generous amounts of moss. The small entrance led into an immediate cavity which was lined with fine grasses, hair and feathers. The five fresh, oval, white eggs were covered with fine dots of

reddish brown rather evenly and not nearly as dense as those of the House Wren." Clapp (1997) incorrectly reported that this nest was found on 22 May 1933 in Wise County, Virginia. The collection data for the egg set, now at the Smithsonian Institution, clearly indicates that the dte was 22 June 1933 and that the site was in Lee County.

North Carolina. In North Carolina, Thomas D. Burleigh (1941) located a nest with four fresh eggs on 16 May 1930 at 1920 m on Mount Mitchell in the Black Mountains of Yancey County. He described it as being well-hidden in the upturned roots of a wind-thrown Fraser fir.

Ryan S. Mays found a nest with six eggs on 19 June 2010 at Balsam Gap (1650 m) in Buncombe County. It was placed in the upturned roots of a fallen yellow birch (*Betula alleghaniensis*) and is the subject of another article in this journal issue (Mays and Neas 2015).

Brian O'Shea and others observed an active nest with five eggs on 5 June 2012 in the upturned roots of what was probably a red spruce along Big Butt Trail on Fence Brush Ridge (ca. 1710 m) on the Buncombe-Yancey County line (e-Bird report, Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology).

Tennessee. On 21 June 1933 at 1675 m on Mt. LeConte in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park (GSMNP) in Sevier County, Albert F. Ganier found a nest with five young placed between the roots of a tree on the bank of a ravine (Coffey 1942; Ganier and Mayfield 1946; Ganier 1962). The young had been on the verge of fledging because they flushed from the nest when Ganier enlarged the entrance to examine its contents. Ganier (1962) described the nest as being 13 cm in diameter and lined with soft materials and feathers, including small Ruffed Grouse (*Bonasa umbellus*) feathers.

Georgia. On 15 June 1922, Thomas D. Burleigh (1925) found what he took to be a recently vacated nest (having held young) on the northern slope of Brasstown Bald in Towns or Union County at an elevation of 1250 m. He described the nest as a ball of fine hemlock (*Tsuga* sp.) twigs and green moss, with an entrance on one side. It was situated in the upturned roots of a large fallen hemlock. Burleigh (1927) found another nest on a steep slope of Brasstown Bald at 1220 m on 22 May 1923. This nest contained five slightly incubated eggs and was 0.8 m from the ground in the upturned roots of a fallen yellow birch. It was a loose ball of green moss lined with Ruffed Grouse feathers.

Observations on fledged young and breeding behavior in the Southern Appalachians

North Carolina. In North Carolina, Alexander Sprunt and Joseph J. Murray

(1930) observed an adult feeding at least two recently fledged young at an elevation of ca. 1585 m on a slope of Grandfather Mountain in Avery County on 1 August 1930.

Stupka (1963) reported that Raymond J. Fleetwood found an adult and two young on 10 June 1935 near Heintooga Ridge (ca. 1220 m) and that F. R. Keating Jr. saw recently fledged young on 12 June 1937 around 1770 m on Andrews Bald. Both locales are within the GSMNP in Swain County.

In 2014, Marilyn Westphal and Marcus B. Simpson Jr. observed three fledglings with an adult along Bald Knob Ridge Trail (ca. 1525 m) off Blue Ridge Parkway mile marker 355 in Yancey County on 20 May, and two fledglings in the same area (probably a second brood) on 1 July (e-Bird report, Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology; M. B. Simpson Jr. unpublished data at Carolina Bird Club website Photo Gallery). A juvenile was later photographed along Bald Knob Trail by Kelly Hughes on 3 August, and Marilyn Westphal and Marcus B. Simpson Jr. saw three to four recently fledged young with adults on 10 September along the trail at the same location they had observed fledglings on 20 May and 1 July (e-Bird reports, Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology; photograph of fledging by M. B. Simpson Jr. posted to Carolina Bird Club website Photo Gallery). These records suggest that three broods may have been raised by the pair occupying this site in 2014.

Tennessee. In Tennessee, George B. Sennett (1887) observed Winter Wrens carrying nest material and food for young in the spruce-fir forest around the summit of Roan Mountain (ca. 1900 m in Carter County) in the summer of 1886.

Albert F. Ganier (1936) and others observed an adult carrying food on 25 June 1936, also on Roan Mountain. In June 1937, a collecting party from the United States National Museum (Smithsonian Institution) visited a number of locales in GSMNP of Tennessee and collected the following (Wetmore 1939):

- a juvenile from ca. 2010 m on Mt. Guyot in Sevier County on 24 June
- one recently fledged young on Inadu Knob in Cooke County at ca. 1700 m on 28 June
- a juvenile from ca. 1370 m on Snake Den Mountain in Cooke County on 28 June

Stedman (1997) cited an unpublished record by Robert B. Lyle of a brood of at least six fledglings observed somewhere in northeastern Tennessee, probably during the 1930s.

Richard L. Knight (2010) reported having seen three recently fledged young on Roan Mountain at Carver's Gap (ca. 1700 m on 14 July 1983) and two fledged young in the spruce-fir forest nearer the summit of Roan Mountain (1916 m) on 4 July 1997. Roan Mountain lies on the border between Tennessee and North Carolina.

Southwest Virginia. The remaining Winter Wren breeding records are all from southwest Virginia: In 1974, as reported by Scott (1975):

- M. Decker, YuLee Larner, and others observed fledged young on 19 June in the red spruce forest around the summit (1682 m) of Whitetop Mountain, lying in Grayson, Smyth, and Washington counties.
- M. Decker and others also observed fledged young in the spruce-fir forest on Mount Rogers (ca. 1740 m) in Grayson or Smyth County on 21 June.
- Charles E. Stevens and Bruce Davenport found fledglings on nearby Pine Mountain (ca. 1220 m) on 23 June.

On 18 June 1986, Barry Kinzie and John Pancake found a fledgling on Beartown Mountain in Tazewell County. Ken Markley and Richard H. Peake also saw an adult carrying food at the summit of Beartown (1436 m) on the same date (Peake 1987).

Near Mountain Lake on Salt Pond Mountain in Giles County, Charles W. S. Ziegenfus observed two family groups during the spring or summer of 1991, one consisting of at least four fledglings (Johnston 2000; C. Ziegenfus pers. comm. to R. S. Mays).

On 10 and 24 June 2004, Ryan S. Mays observed two family groups of adults with five and at least four recently fledged young, respectively, in eastern hemlock (*T. canadensis*)-northern hardwood forest near Mountain Lake (R. S. Mays unpublished data).

On 30 May 2005, Mays watched a male (which had been singing) stuffing bits of green moss into a small natural cavity in an old fallen birch log in woods near Mountain Lake. When examined later on 23 July, the cavity was found to contain what appeared to be a non-breeding nest composed entirely of green moss and dead twigs with an unlined cup. Multiple non-breeding, or dummy, nests are commonly built by male Winter Wrens each breeding season (Hejl et al. 2002).

On 10 June 2009, Mays found another possible dummy nest placed in the upturned roots of a large fallen red spruce near the summit (1746 m) of Mount Rogers on the Smyth-Grayson County line, where several male Winter Wrens were singing and evidently holding territories. He felt inside the ball of green moss and twigs with one finger, but the interior was empty and did not seem to be lined.

On 25 June 2010, Mays flushed at least four recently fledged young from dense fern growth near the summit of Mount Rogers. He also observed an adult feeding at least two recently fledged young around 1460 m in predominantly northern hardwood forest on the western slope of Mount Rogers on 17 June 2011. Later the same day he found an adult with one recently fledged young in the spruce-fir forest just below the summit of Mount Rogers.

Summary and discussion

In summary, the breeding season of the Winter Wren in the southern Appalachians extends from approximately late April through late August, suggesting that the birds are double-brooded or readily replace lost clutches and nests. Winter Wrens are known to raise at least two broods elsewhere in North America (Hejl et al. 2002). Clutch size generally ranges from 4-7 eggs, the incubation period averages 16 days, and young fledge within about 16-19 days (Bent 1948, Hejl et al. 2002).

The earliest documented active nest in the southern Appalachians is the nest with four fresh eggs found by Burleigh (1941) on 16 May (1930) on Mount Mitchell in the Black Mountains of North Carolina, suggesting that territory establishment and nest-building started possibly as early as late April and that egg-laying began at least as early as 13 May even at this high-elevation site (ca. 1920 m). However, the 20 May 2014 observation of recently fledged young along the Bald Knob Ridge Trail, also in the Black Mountains but at a lower elevation (ca. 1525 m), by Marilyn Westphal and Marcus B. Simpson Jr. (e-Bird report, Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology), indicates that egg laying for this brood probably began in mid-April.

Camblos (Smithsonian Institution Archives, Accession No. 13-235 Camblos, Joshua F. B., Field Books, 1932-1939) found the latest active nest with five fresh eggs on 22 June 1933 in Lee County, Virginia, but fledged young observed on 10 September 2014 along Bald Knob Ridge Trail in the Black Mountains by Marilyn Westphal and Marcus B. Simpson Jr. shows that nesting may occasionally be attempted as late as August, with young fledging even as late as about 10 September (e-Bird report, Cornell University of Ornithology). This last record is also probable evidence that three broods may be attempted by some pairs in the region, since recently fledged young had been observed at the site in May and July 2014.

Further study of the Winter Wren during the breeding season in the southern Appalachians would be helpful in providing more comprehensive data on its breeding ecology, nesting habits, territoriality, and reproductive success. The species has a marked propensity for nesting in the upturned roots of fallen trees, especially in riparian areas in old-growth forests (e.g. Hejl et al. 2002), so special attention should be paid to these potential nest sites, as they appear to be an important factor in determining breeding site suitability and nest site selection for this species. Fallen trees are now especially numerous in spruce-fir forests, where Fraser firs killed by the invasive balsam woolly adelgid (*Adelges piceae*) have fallen or blown over in windstorms. Similar increases in the number of fallen trees will also occur in forests containing large hemlocks killed by the invasive hemlock woolly adelgid (*Adelges tsugae*).

Observers should report and carefully document for the literature all breeding season observations and nesting records of this interesting high-

elevation species in western North Carolina and other parts of the southern Appalachian region.

Acknowledgments

I thank Brian K. Schmidt, museum specialist in the Department of Vertebrate Zoology, Division of Birds, National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution, for sending me egg collection data. I also thank Aubrey O. Neas Jr., Christina Harvey, and several anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments and suggestions on an earlier draft of the manuscript.

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Nesting of the Winter Wren (*Troglodytes hiemalis*) in the Black Mountains of North Carolina

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On 19 June 2010, the authors visited Balsam Gap in the Black Mountains of North Carolina. About 17:00 EDT, while walking down the forested, southwestern slope of Bearwallow Stand Ridge between the Mountains-to-Sea hiking trail and the Blue Ridge Parkway, just within Buncombe County, we saw a Winter Wren (*Troglodytes hiemalis*) flush suddenly about a meter ahead of us and quickly disappear in the undergrowth. Shortly afterward, Mays found the well-concealed, dome-shaped nest from which the bird had evidently flown. The nest was placed 0.9 m from the ground amongst the southwest-facing upturned roots of a large yellow birch (*Betula alleghaniensis*) that appeared to have fallen several years earlier. It was tucked in a cavity formed by large, divergent roots at the base of the fallen tree and was partially sheltered from above by several strips of loose bark and clumps of overhanging soil, moss, and debris adhering to other roots and rootlets. Growing on the wood just below the base of the nest was a small polypore fungus, tentatively identified as *Piptoporus betulinus*. The exterior of the nest was composed entirely of green mosses and red spruce twigs, with perhaps a few Fraser fir twigs intermixed. Its outer dimensions were estimated as follows: height 12-14 cm, width 11-13 cm.

Mays carefully inspected the nest proper and found that it contained six white eggs. To see the eggs and count them, it was necessary to very slightly enlarge the small entrance hole of the nest with one finger and then use a flashlight to brighten the interior. It was still not possible, however, to tell if the eggs might have had any pale speckling on them. Upon touching the eggs, Mays could tell that they were warm, which seemed to indicate that the female had indeed been incubating. The cup was lined extensively with a mixture of soft, grayish down and body contour feathers. At least one contour feather near the entrance was about 3 cm in length. The distinctive and familiar coloration pattern of rufous, black, and white markings on this latter feather made it instantly recognizable as that of a Ruffed Grouse (*Bonasa umbellus*).

After Mays inspected the contents of the nest, Neas photographed it (Figs. 1, 2). However, because the eggs were resting just below the rim of the entrance hole and the angles from which he could hold the camera were greatly limited, the eggs could not be seen in the resulting photographs. Less

than five minutes after locating, examining, and then photographing the nest, the authors proceeded down the slope.

The nest site was located in an old-growth spruce-fir-northern hardwood forest at an elevation of approximately 1650 m. Dominant trees in the immediate vicinity were large red spruces (*Picea rubens*) and yellow birches, and there were also a few Fraser firs (*Abies fraseri*) standing nearby. The understory at the site was relatively open, but there were several moss-covered fallen trees, tangles of fallen branches, and large boulders lying about on the forest floor. Catawba rhododendron (*Rhododendron catawbiense*), dense patches of intermediate wood ferns (*Dryopteris intermedia*), and a few hobblebushes (*Viburnum lantanoides*) surrounded the site.

This article places on record what appears to be one of only eight active Winter

Figure 1. The Winter Wren nest with six eggs found on 19 June 2010 in the spruce-fir northern hardwood forest at Balsam Gap in the Black Mountains of North Carolina. This nest was placed in typical Winter Wren fashion in the upturned roots of a fallen yellow birch. Photograph by Aubrey O. Neas, Jr.

Figure 2. Another view of the Winter Wren nest found on 19 June 2010, showing more of the root wad surrounding it and the polyporus fungus growing on the wood. Photograph by Aubrey O. Neas, Jr.

Wren nests found in the southern Appalachians (Mays 2015). It was the first nest observed in this southernmost portion of the species' breeding range in eastern North America since June 1933.

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Mays, R. S. 2015. A review of Winter Wren (*Troglodytes hiemalis*) breeding records from the Southern Appalachians. Chat 79:109-115.

Nesting Mississippi Kites (*Ictinia mississippiensis*) in Mecklenburg County, North Carolina

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An active Mississippi Kite (*Ictinia mississippiensis*) nest was confirmed in Mecklenburg County in 2014. This nest is the westernmost nesting of the Mississippi Kite reported in North Carolina and provides evidence for a western expansion of its breeding range here.

Locating the nest

On the morning of June 29, 2014, Lucy Quintilliano observed a Mississippi Kite land in a tree in the front yard of a house at the intersection of Shaftesbury Road and Essington Drive. She reported the presence of the bird.

A pair of kites was seen by local birders in the same general area the following day, and two were seen circling overhead daily after that. The kites were typically seen over one of three adjacent neighborhoods (Crown Colony, Hampton Leas and Bishops Ridge) about four miles north of Providence Springs Elementary School. This residential area is only one-tenth mile away from the Wilby Site, a designated Mecklenburg County Natural Heritage Site, and three-tenths of a mile from the McAlpine Creek greenway corridor which contains a significant stretch of floodplain forest and an active Great Blue Heron (*Ardea herodias*) rookery. Neighbors became very interested and began to report kite sightings to Mecklenburg County Breeding Bird Atlas (BBA) project volunteers. They reported hearing the calls of the birds as well. Everyone was hoping to find a nest.

On July 7, 2014, Quintilliano noticed two kites fly into a tall sweetgum (*Liquidambar styraciflua*) in the front yard of one house in the neighborhood. She immediately noticed the kites had become very agitated as she stopped near the tree to observe them. They soon became "aggressive", circled low and actually dove towards her. She got a brief look at a nest and then left quickly to minimize the birds' stress.

She returned later and from a distance could clearly see a stick nest at least 60 feet high very nearly hidden in foliage. She attempted to view the nest from several vantage points and was eventually able to see the tail and head of an

adult sitting on the nest. On July 24, 2014, she observed a chick's head peering over the edge of the nest, and she was able to take a crude picture of the young bird through her scope.

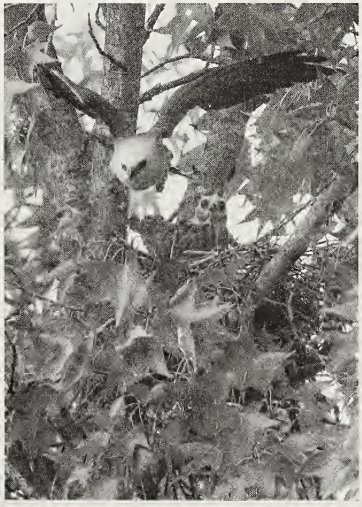
Observations of the nest and behavior

The precise location of this nest was never publicized to local birders as the kites continued to appear stressed by too much attention and activity around it. Quintilliano was surprised by the kites' aggressive behavior but later read that Mississippi Kites "become acclimated to (in fact, aggressive toward) people who get too close to nest sites" (Dunne 2006). She noted the pair seemed most aggressive when she wore brightly colored clothing. She was "chased" for several blocks by the kites when wearing bright orange, yellow or green walking attire designed to be highly visible in the dark.

On July 25, 2014, Phil Fowler attempted to photograph the birds in the nest. The attempt was technically challenging given how high and densely buried the nest was in the tree. During his stay a juvenile bird emerged onto a branch about 6 feet from the nest (Figure 1). Later, an adult arrived with what appeared to be a dragonfly, and the juvenile returned to the nest where it was fed. Fowler was able to repeatedly photograph the nest over a three-hour period without disturbing the birds. Some photographs were taken about 100 feet from the nest, and he was eventually able to take pictures over branches that had blocked the view from below (Figures 2, 3, and 4).

Figure 1. Juvenile on branch.

Figure 2. Adult feeding juvenile in nest.



Figures 3 & 4. Adult departing nest and adult with prey (dragonfly).

On August 3, 2014, while observing one adult feeding a juvenile, Quintilliano observed two other adult kites circling overhead. This was her first observation of more than two adults in the area. In the Great Plains this species is virtually communal - nesting, roosting, and foraging in groups of 50 or more - but it is generally a more solitary nester in the Southeast (Dunne 2006). It is possible more than one nest was present in the general vicinity. The date of fledging of the juvenile is unknown.

Historical records for Mississippi Kite breeding sites in North Carolina

In the first half of the twentieth century, the Mississippi Kite, like many raptor species, experienced decades of population decline and a contraction of its breeding range in the southeastern United States. In South Carolina, in the 1950's and 1960's, ornithologists began to document a small population increase and a slow northward expansion of breeding sites (Parker and Ogden 1979).

By the early 1970's, the Mississippi Kite was discovered in the coastal plain of North Carolina. The species was first reported during the breeding season along the Roanoke River in 1972 (Teulings 1972) and later in Anson County in 1975 (Teulings 1976) and again in 1979 (LeGrand 1979). Breeding was suspected in the Roanoke River region, along the state line in Anson County, and along the Waccamaw and Lumber rivers, but no active nests had been confirmed (Teulings 1975). Merrill Lynch, a biologist with the North Carolina Natural Heritage Program, believed these kites represented "a recent range expansion as a result of the "spillover effect" from population increases further south in South Carolina" and that the expansion of breeding into North Carolina was "not a reoccupation of former range" (Lynch 1981).

In 1995, the first active nest of Mississippi Kite was finally confirmed in the state (Broadfoot 1995). On July 23, a nest was discovered by Mary Jane Wells and Hal Broadfoot in the top of a tall sweetgum tree, in a residential neighborhood in the town of Laurinburg, in Scotland County. This site was about 15 miles north of a known breeding location near Bennettsville, SC and about 25 miles east of Anson County. Since 1995, the Mississippi Kite has continued to slowly expand as a breeding resident in North Carolina.

Historical record for Mississippi Kite in western North Carolina

Until recently, sightings of Mississippi Kite in the Charlotte region were very rare. In fact, prior to 1980, there had been only four published records of Mississippi Kite in the entire central Piedmont and mountain region of North Carolina. Two were killed in Cherokee County in 1893, one was seen in Durham County in April 1976 and one was reported from Cedar Mountain in June 1976 (Lynch 1981). Sightings in the central and western part of the state

began to increase very slowly in the 1980's and 1990's.

The first Mississippi Kite observed in Mecklenburg County was seen on October 6, 1983. David Wright watched an adult bird in flight over the town of Davidson. His detailed description of the account was reviewed and his sight record was published in *The Chat* (LeGrand 1984). In 1984, Bill Hilton reported a kite in York County, South Carolina, just south of Charlotte on August 2nd (LeGrand 1984).

David Wright reported a second sighting of this species in Mecklenburg County on September 15, 1989 after he watched a group of 11 kites fly over University City Lake during fall migration (Wright, pers. comm.). Despite the relatively close proximity of a breeding population in eastern Anson County, no Mississippi Kites were reported in Mecklenburg County for another twenty years.

In the spring of 2009, Richard Fletcher and Ken Kneidel reported sighting a pair of Mississippi Kites active around the campus of Providence Springs Elementary School, east of Providence Road and south of Country Lane, in southern Mecklenburg County. The pair remained active there the entire summer and many local birders came to see them.

One local observer, Taylor Piephoff, reported seeing two fledged juveniles with the adults in early August (Piephoff, pers. comm.). The birds may have nested in a tall sweetgum tree that was used as a favorite perch, but nesting was not confirmed (according to established BBA protocol). Richard Fletcher reported that a pair of adults returned to the same location on April 18 in 2010.

Birders assisting with the BBA project reported four kites in the same general area in May 2010, three kites within a few miles of this site in 2011 and kites present again in 2012, but no nest was discovered. In 2013, several BBA volunteers reported up to four Mississippi Kites sighted at various times between April and August at several locations within a five-mile radius of the original school site and again no nest was found.

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Eastern Towhee
Charlotte, NC
Photo by Gary P. Carter

BRIEFS FOR THE FILES

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(All dates Spring 2015, unless otherwise noted)

Briefs for the Files is a seasonal collection of uncommon-to-rare or unusual North and South Carolina bird sightings and events which do not necessarily require a more detailed Field Note or article. Reports of your sightings are due the 20th of the month after the end of the previous season.

Winter	*December 1 - February 28*	*due March 20*
Spring	*March 1 - May 31*	*due June 20*
Summer	*June 1 - July 31*	*due August 20*
Fall	*August 1 - November 30*	*due December 20*

Reports may be submitted in any format, but I prefer that you use email, list multiple sightings in taxonomic order (rather than by date or location), and type your report directly into the body of the email. If your sightings are in a file, please copy-and-paste the text into the body of the email, rather than sending an attachment.

Suitable reports for the Briefs include any sightings you feel are unusual, rare, noteworthy, or just plain interesting to you in any way! It is my responsibility to decide which reports merit inclusion in the Briefs.

Please be sure to include details of any rare or hard-to-identify birds.

I rely in part on sightings reported in Carolinabirds. Please don't, however, rely on me to pick up your sightings from Carolinabirds. Instead, please also send your sightings directly to me as described above.

If I feel that your sighting warrants a Field Note, I will contact either you or the appropriate state Field Notes editor. You may, of course, submit your Field Note directly to the editor without going through me.

Reports published herein may include sightings that require review by the state bird record's committee. Such reports are not considered accepted records until, and unless, they are so ruled by the committee.

Abbreviations: **BRC** – Bird Record Committee, **BRP** – Blue Ridge Parkway, **Co** – County, **et al.** – and others, **m. obs.** – multiple observers, **NC** – North Carolina, **NF** – National Forest, **NWR** – National Wildlife Refuge, **Rd** – Road, **SC** – South Carolina, **SP** – State Park, **TS** – Tropical Storm, **WMA** – Wildlife Management Area, **WTP** – Water Treatment Plant

Black-bellied Whistling-Duck: Eight were photographed at a pond at the Cape Fear Country Club in New Hanover Co, NC, 13 May (Travis Lackey). One, quite wary of humans and showing no leg bands or feather-wear, on private property in Manns Harbor, Dare Co, NC, 18 May (Jeff Lewis) was a one-day wonder. Seven on Linville Land Harbor Lake in Avery Co, NC, 27 May (Patricia Burns, Dwayne Martin) was a first for that county and the third record of this species in the mountain region.

Greater White-fronted Goose: Spring sightings included two photographed at Clemson University Simpson Experiment Station, Anderson Co, SC, 2 Mar (Cherrie Sneed); two in Happy Valley, Caldwell Co, NC, 4 Mar through 1 Apr (Dwayne Martin); and one amongst Canada Geese at Bur Mil Park in Greensboro, Guilford Co, NC, 19 Apr (Nate Swick) through the late date of 2 May (Jamie Adams).

Snow Goose: A blue-morph individual photographed at Dobbins Farm in Anderson Co, SC, 2 Mar (Cherrie Sneed) was a good find for that area.

Ross's Goose: The two geese found at a pond in West Ashley, Charleston Co, 28 Feb (Chet Morse) remained until 18 Mar, when photographed (Cherrie Sneed).

Northern Shoveler: Four at the WTP along NC-191 in Henderson Co, NC, 3 May (Wayne Forsythe) were unusual for the mountain region in late spring. Redhead: A drake lingered at a pond in Pine Knoll Shores, Carteret Co, NC, to the end of the period (Ron Johnson).

Ring-necked Duck: Two hens off the Oceanana Pier in Atlantic Beach, Carteret Co, NC, 29 Mar (John Fussell, et al.) were unusual for saltwater.

Lesser Scaup: A drake on Bass Lake, Watauga Co, NC, 2 May (Ricky Davis, David Howell) was somewhat late.

Common Eider: Of the four eiders seen off Edisto Beach SP, Colleton Co, SC, during the winter, one of the immature drakes remained until 28 Mar (Jack Rogers).

Harlequin Duck: An adult drake was seen around the Oceanana Pier in Atlantic Beach, Carteret Co, NC, 23 Mar (John Fussell) through 3 Apr (Steve Howell). An immature drake was seen flying north off of Johnnie Mercer's Pier in Wrightsville Beach, New Hanover Co, NC, 26 Mar (Sam Cooper).

White-winged Scoter: Sightings were made on several inland lakes in March— one at the Schwann WTP in Lewisville, Forsyth Co, NC, late February through 29 Mar (Phil Dickinson, m. obs.); a hen at Lake Conestee Nature Park, Greenville Co, SC, 6-16 Mar (m. obs.); three on Lake Crabtree, Wake Co, NC, 15 Mar (Brendan Klick); and one on Lake Julian, Buncombe Co, NC, 8 Mar and 26 Mar (Wayne Forsythe, et al.).

Long-tailed Duck: Spring sightings included two off of North Topsail Beach, Onslow Co, NC, 16 Mar (Gilbert Grant); one flying north off Johnnie Mercer's Pier, New Hanover Co, NC, 26 Mar (Sam Cooper); and one lingering off of Huntington Beach SP, Georgetown Co, SC, until 17 Apr (Paul Serridge).

Hooded Merganser: One on Lake Hills in Forsyth Co, NC, 4 May (Cynthia Donaldson) was somewhat late, possibly attempting to breed in that area. Breeding was confirmed in Greensboro, Guilford Co, NC, when a hen was photographed with 13 ducklings, 2 May (Martin Wall); and at Lake Crabtree, Wake Co, NC, when a hen was seen with seven ducklings, 25 May (Thierry Besançon).

Common Merganser: One well-seen amongst Red-breasted Mergansers on the Bogue Sound off of Pine Knoll Shores, Carteret Co, NC, 9 Mar (John Fussell, et al.) was unusual for brackish water.

Red-breasted Merganser: 420 around Sunset Beach and Ocean Isle Beach, Brunswick Co, NC, 28 Mar (Sam Cooper) was an impressive count. Individuals on Jordan Lake, Chatham Co, NC, 3 May (Rick Payne, Kerry & Trish MacPherson) and at Wrightsville Beach, New Hanover Co, NC, 22 May (Cooper) were late to depart.

Pacific Loon: One was photographed amongst Common Loons off Johnnie Mercer's Pier, New Hanover Co, NC, 14 Apr (Sam Cooper).

Common Loon: 720 off Johnnie Mercer's Pier, New Hanover Co, NC, 6 Apr (Sam Cooper) was an impressive concentration.

Horned Grebe: Somewhat late was one on the Yadkin River in Forsyth Co, NC, 2 May (Rob Rogers); two at Pivers Island, Carteret Co, NC, 11 May (John Fussell); and one in a canal along NC-12 at Cedar Island NWR, Carteret Co, 17 May (Fussell, et al.).

Red-necked Grebe: Sightings included one off Huntington Beach SP, Georgetown Co, SC, 7 Mar (Caroline Eastman); one at the south end of Oregon Inlet, Dare Co, NC, 8-9 Mar (Jeff Lewis); one on Belews Lake, Rockingham Co, NC, 13-19 Mar (Martin Wall); two off Cape Point, Dare Co, 19 Mar (Chloe Walker, et al.); one at Mason Inlet, New Hanover Co, NC, 21 Mar (Sam Cooper); and one around Oregon Inlet Fishing Center, 29 Mar (Lewis) through 3 Apr (Alan MacEachren).

Red-necked Grebe, 29 March 2015, Oregon Inlet, Dare Co, NC.
Photo by Jeff Lewis.

Eared Grebe: One was seen on the ocean off of Huntington Beach SP, Georgetown Co, SC, 7 Mar (Caroline Eastman). Three at the WTP along Fire Tower Rd in Onslow Co, NC, 1 May (Guy McGrane, Jim & Laura O'Donnell) were great finds.

Western Grebe: One was seen and photographed off Cape Point, Dare Co, NC, 19 Mar (Chloe Walker, et al.) and 28 Mar (Brian Patteson).

Trindade Petrel: On pelagic trips out of Hatteras, Dare Co, NC, one was seen 21 May; two were seen 22 May; and one was seen 24 May (Brian Patteson, et al.).

Bermuda Petrel: This very rare petrel was seen and photographed during a pelagic trip out of Hatteras, Dare Co, NC, 25 May (Brian Patteson, et al.).

Black-capped Petrel: This species was seen on all 13 consecutive pelagic trips out of Hatteras, Dare Co, 20 May through 1 Jun, with a high count of 85 made 22 May (Brian Patteson, et al.).

Fea's Petrel: Individuals were seen on pelagic trips out of Hatteras, Dare Co, NC, 22 May, 23 May, 25 May, and 1 Jun (Brian Patteson, et al.).

Zino's Petrel: An "interesting" petrel, either a small, pale Fea's Petrel or the rarer Zino's Petrel, was briefly seen and photographed at distance during a pelagic trip out of Hatteras, Dare Co, NC, 25 May (Brian Patteson, et al.). This petrel's true identity will probably remain a mystery as the bird was too far away to conclusively to prove this enigmatic species.

Cory's Shearwater: This species was seen on all of 13 consecutive pelagic trips out of Hatteras, Dare Co, 20 May through 1 Jun, with a high count of 261 on 29 May (Brian Patteson, et al.).

Great Shearwater: This shearwater was seen on the latter ten of 13 consecutive pelagic trips out of Hatteras, Dare Co, 20 May through 1 Jun, with numbers peaking at 164, an impressive count for the spring period, 29 May (Brian Patteson, et al.).

Sooty Shearwater: Seen on all but the last of 13 consecutive pelagic trips out of Hatteras, Dare Co, 20 May through 1 Jun, Sooty Shearwater numbers peaked at 35 on 27 May (Brian Patteson, et al.). Sightings made from shore included one off North Topsail Beach, Onslow Co, NC, 25 May (Gilbert Grant) and five off the Oceanana Pier, Carteret Co, NC, 30 May (John Fussell).

Manx Shearwater: This cold-water shearwater was seen on six of 13 consecutive pelagic trips out of Hatteras, Dare Co, 20 May through 1 Jun, with a total of 17 individuals seen during that period (Brian Patteson, et al.).

Leach's Storm-Petrel: One was photographed in flight over Mason Inlet, New Hanover Co, NC, during the passage of TS Ana, 10 May (Sam Cooper). This storm-petrel was seen on all but the first of 13 consecutive pelagic trips out of Hatteras, Dare Co, 20 May through 1 Jun, with a high count of 25 made on the last trip, 1 Jun (Brian Patteson, et al.).

Band-rumped Storm-Petrel: This larger storm-petrel was seen on ten of 13 consecutive pelagic trips out of Hatteras, Dare Co, 20 May through 1 Jun,

with a total of 41 during that period (Brian Patteson, et al.).

Hydrobatidae species: A storm-petrel of undetermined species was seen on Buckhorn Reservoir, Wilson Co, NC, after the passage of TS Ana, 11 May (Ricky Davis).

White-tailed Tropicbird: Individuals were seen and photographed on pelagic trips out of Hatteras, Dare Co, NC, 26 May, an adult; and 28 May, a second-year bird (Brian Patteson, et al.).

Magnificent Frigatebird: The passage of TS Ana resulted in multiple sightings along the coast in May—one over Wrightsville Beach, New Hanover Co, NC, 9 May (Lucas Bobay); one over Beaufort, Carteret Co, NC, 10 May (Susan Boyd) and 11 May (John Fussell, et al.); two over NC-12 between Avon and Buxton, Dare Co, NC, 12 May (Brian Patteson); and one off Seabrook Island, Charleston Co, SC, 13 May (David Gardner). A couple of sightings towards the end of month may not have been related to the passage of TS Ana—a juvenile bird over the Bogue Sound at Morehead City, Carteret Co, NC, 27 May (Ed Dombrofski); presumably the same juvenile bird over nearby Beaufort, one hour later (Jeannie Kraus); and one near Masonboro Inlet, New Hanover Co, NC, 29 May (Sam Cooper).

Brown Booby: Pending review by the NC BRC was the report of an Brown Booby photographed off of North Topsail Beach, Onslow Co, NC, 16 May (Jamie Adams).

Great Cormorant: An immature bird at Masonboro Inlet, New Hanover Co, NC, 22 May (David Weesner) and 26 May (Sam Cooper) was late to depart.

American White Pelicans, 22 March 2015, Haywood Co, NC.
Photo by Connie and Stan Wulkowicz.

Anhinga: Locally unusual was a female at a pond in Morehead City, Carteret Co, NC, 25 Apr (Anne & Joan Galli, Carol Reigle, et al.) and two circling overhead where US-64 crosses over the Tar River in Nash Co, NC, 19 May (Ricky Davis).

American White Pelican: A few of the more impressive sightings involved 28 photographed on Lake Junaluska, Haywood Co, NC, 22 Mar (Connie & Stan Wulkowicz); 49 photographed on Belews Lake, Rockingham Co, NC, 7 Apr (Martin Wall); 246 at Canal WMA, Berkeley Co, SC, 11 Apr (Pam Ford, Craig Watson); and ten on the northern end of Falls Lake in Durham Co, NC, 4 May (John Finnegan).

American Bittern: Six, three of which were heard calling, at Rocky River Nature Park, Anderson Co, SC, 2 Apr (Brad Dalton) was an impressive count.

Least Bittern: One found at the pond along the Nature Trail at Fort Macon SP, Carteret Co, NC, 29 Mar (Clyde Atkins) was early.

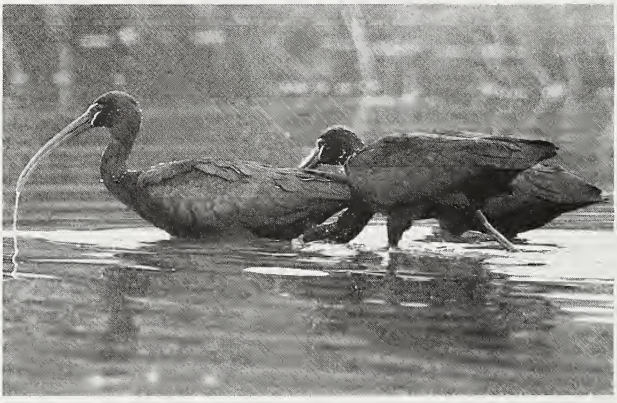
Great Egret: Two active nests were found in a Great Blue Heron rookery near where Ellerbe Creek empties into Falls Lake, Durham Co, NC, 19 May (Dan Kaplan). Active egret nests were first noted at this site last spring.

Snowy Egret: One at a farm pond just north of Zebulon, Wake Co, NC, 20 Apr (Ricky Davis) was unusual for an inland site in spring.

Yellow-crowned Night-Heron: This species returned to two traditional nesting sites in urban areas of the NC Piedmont in March—near downtown Charlotte, Mecklenburg Co, 11 Mar (Ron Clark); and Miller Park, Forsyth Co, 23 Mar (Phil Dickinson).

White Ibis: 12 in flight over I-40/85 in Alamance Co, NC, 16 Apr (Andrew Thornton) were unusual for the Piedmont in spring.

Glossy Ibis: Six in a flooded field near Belvoir Elementary School in Pitt Co, NC, 29 Apr through 1 May (Howard Vainright, et al.) were unusual so far from the coast.



Glossy Ibis, 29 April 2015, Pitt Co, NC.
Photo by Howard Vainright.

White-faced Ibis: One photographed on the mudflats where Horsepen Creek empties into Lake Brandt, Guilford Co, NC, 4 Apr (Martin Wall) was a fantastic find. All previous records of this species in the Carolinas are from the coastal region, mostly from Mattamuskeet NWR, and this sighting was the first made in the Piedmont.

Swallow-tailed Kite: Two flying north from Rodanthe to Pea Island NWR, Dare Co, NC, 17 Mar (Chloe Walker, et al.) was a noteworthy sighting. Two were seen in a kettle of Mississippi Kites over Northwest, Brunswick Co, NC, 25 May (Jamie Adams), not far from the location of the active nest discovered in 2013.

White-tailed Kite: An adult seen and photographed at Bear Island WMA, Colleton Co, SC, 7 Mar (Carl Miller) was a great find. It was also briefly seen the next morning, 8 Mar (Pam Ford, Craig Watson) but not thereafter. It had been seven years since this vagrant from the western United States was last seen in the Carolinas.

Mississippi Kite: One seen in Rocky Mount, Nash Co, NC, 8 Apr (Ricky Davis) was very early. Davis suspects this bird was part of the local breeding population rather than a migrant.

Golden Eagle: A first-year bird was seen in the Pond Mountain Game Land, Ashe Co, NC, 10 Mar (Brian O'Shea) and again 21 Mar (Merrill Lynch).

Black Rail: Two were heard calling in the Cuddo Unit of Santee NWR, Clarendon Co, SC, 14 May (Dick & Dorothy Rosche). Two were also heard at Bear Island WMA, Colleton Co, SC, 31 May (Jack Rogers).

King Rail: Two at Jordan Lake, Chatham Co, NC, during its Spring Bird Count, 3 May (Deborah Copeland, Ginger Travis) were good finds.

Common Gallinule: One flushed from the shore of the lake adjacent to Schenck Forest, Wake Co, NC, 9 May (John Finnegan, Chris Moorman) was locally unusual.

Sandhill Cranes, 10 May 2015, Lee Co, NC.
Photo by Jeff Beane.

Sandhill Crane: Two seen in a field adjacent to a Bojangles' restaurant in Tramway, Lee Co, NC, 7 May (*fide* Tom Snow), seen and photographed by many through 14 May (Dave Hart), were unusual for that area.

Black-necked Stilt: Individuals at the Clemson Aquaculture Facility, Pickens Co, SC, 20 Apr (Edward Pivorun) and on the mudflats at Lake Crabtree, Wake Co, NC, 11 May (Sam Jolly, Ed Landi, m. obs.) were great finds for those inland sites.

American Golden-Plover: Individuals were found in Holden Beach, Brunswick Co, NC, where photographed, 24 Apr (Lynn Erla Beegle, Jeri Smart, et al.); at the Super Sod farm in Orangeburg Co, SC, 10 May (Pam Ford); and on Ocracoke Island, Hyde Co, NC, in late May (Helmut Mueller, et al.).

Piping Plover: The two highest counts for NC and SC were, respectively, 27 at the Rachel Carson Reserve, Carteret Co, 24 Mar (John Fussell) and 71 on Kiawah Island, Charleston Co, 17 Mar (Aaron Given).

Solitary Sandpiper: One at Bear Island WMA, Colleton Co, SC, 21 Feb (Caroline Eastman) was either an extremely early spring migrant or a rare wintering individual.

Willet: 18 at Lake Julian, Buncombe Co, NC, 25 Apr (Wayne Forsythe) provided a new record high count for the mountain region. 12 Willets remained at that site 1 May (Bob Olthoff, Connie & Stan Wulkowicz).

Whimbrel: Some of the higher counts were 123 at the Rachel Carson Reserve, Carteret Co, NC, 21 Apr (John Fussell); 350 at the west end of Kiawah Island, Charleston Co, SC, 15 May (Michael Dorcas); and 124 at the Rachel Carson Reserve, 20 May (Fussell).

Long-billed Curlew: One, possibly the same individual seen at that site last October, at the east end of Shackleford Banks, Carteret Co, NC, 22 Mar (Chandra Biggerstaff, Jack Fennell, John Fussell, Stan Rule) was a good find.

Ruddy Turnstone: One on the mudflats at Lake Crabtree, Wake Co, NC, 11 May (Eddie Owens) was noteworthy for that inland area.

Red Knot: A couple of impressive counts were made in Charleston Co, SC, in mid-April—6000 on Kiawah Island, 13 Apr (Aaron Given) and 1200+ at Breach Inlet, 17 Apr (Craig Watson). Though the count from Kiawah Island seems extreme, any count approaching that number would be noteworthy.

Ruff: A juvenile Ruff was seen at Santee Coastal Reserve, Charleston Co, SC, 6 Mar (Barbara & Steve Thomas) through 8 Mar (Jack Rogers). One photographed at Bear Island WMA, Colleton Co, SC, 22 Mar (Pam Ford) may have been the same individual seen at that site in February.

Long-billed Dowitcher: One at Lake Conestee Nature Park, Greenville Co, SC, 16-18 May (Eddie Owens, m. obs.) was a new species for that park.

***Limnodromus* species**: Four dowitchers of undetermined species on the mudflats at Lake Crabtree, Wake Co, NC, 11 May (Eddie Owens) were noteworthy for an inland site.

American Woodcock: Four birds flushed from a single spot in a wet bottomland of the French Broad River Valley in Henderson Co, NC, 3 May (Wayne Forsythe) were considered unusual.

Red-necked Phalarope: Following the passage of TS Ana, one was seen on a flooded athletic field in Wilmington, New Hanover Co, NC, 10 May (Sam Cooper); two were seen on South Pond at Pea Island NWR, Dare Co, NC, 10 May (Alan MacEachren); and 12 were seen at Buckhorn Reservoir, Wilson Co, NC, 11 May (Ricky Davis). A high count of 43 was made on a pelagic trip out of Hatteras, Dare Co, NC, 22 May (Brian Patteson, et al.).

***Phalaropus* species**: Of the 47 phalaropes seen at Buckhorn Reservoir, Wilson Co, NC, following the passage of TS Ana, 11 May, 35 of those were too distant to be identified to species, though were likely Red-necked Phalaropes (Ricky Davis).

South Polar Skua: Skuas were seen on nine of 13 consecutive pelagic trips out of Hatteras, 20 May through 1 Jun, with a high count of five, 1 Jun (Brian Patteson, et al.).

Pomarine Jaeger: This jaeger species was seen on 11 of 13 consecutive pelagic trips out of Hatteras, 20 May through 1 Jun, with a high count of eight on 20 May (Brian Patteson, et al.). One seen flying north off Masonboro Inlet, New Hanover Co, NC, 29 May (Sam Cooper) was noteworthy for being so close to shore.

Parasitic Jaeger: Two seen off Seaview Pier in North Topsail Beach, Onslow Co, NC, 1 May (John Fussell) was the only "from-shore" sighting reported.

Long-tailed Jaeger: This elegant jaeger was seen on the last nine of 13 consecutive pelagic trips out of Hatteras, 20 May through 1 Jun, with several impressive counts made on the later trips including 11 on 30 May (Brian Patteson, et al.).

Razorbill: Three seen off Johnnie Mercer's Pier, New Hanover Co, NC, 6 Apr (Sam Cooper) were somewhat late to depart.

Black-headed Gull: A first-summer bird found at Mason Inlet, New Hanover Co, NC, 23 May (Sam Cooper) was seen and photographed by many through 6 June (Scott Winton). This rare vagrant from Europe is found along the Carolina coast almost annually, but most sightings are made in winter. This sighting was the latest ever made in spring.

Little Gull: Individuals were found amongst flocks of Bonaparte's Gulls at Cape Point, Dare Co, NC, a first-winter bird, 7 Mar (Brian Patteson); off Pine Knoll Shores, Carteret Co, NC, an adult, 10 Mar (John Fussell, et al.); and off the Oceanana Pier in Atlantic Beach, Carteret Co, a second-winter bird, 1 Apr (Fussell).

Laughing Gull: 68 at Buckhorn Reservoir, Wilson Co, NC, following the passage of TS Ana, 11 May (Ricky Davis) was a noteworthy count for an inland site. Individuals at Lookout Shoals Lake, Catawba Co, NC, an adult, 14

Apr (Dwayne Martin) and at Salem Lake, Forsyth Co, NC, an immature bird, 26 May (Phil Dickinson, et al.) were good finds for those sites in the western Piedmont.

Herring Gull: Two at Lake James SP in Burke Co, NC, 16 Apr (Jamie Cameron) were locally unusual. 31 at Buckhorn Reservoir, Wilson Co, NC, following the passage of TS Ana, 11 May (Ricky Davis) was a good count for that site.

Iceland Gull: An immature bird was photographed on the Currituck Sound off Duck, Dare Co, NC, 2 May (Jim Gould, Jeff Lewis).

Glaucous Gull: First-winter individuals were seen and photographed at Fort Macon SP, Carteret Co, NC, 4 Apr (Ryan Justice) and at the north end of Wrightsville Beach, New Hanover Co, NC, 19 Apr (Sam Cooper).

Sooty Tern: Two seen on a small island at New Topsail Inlet, Pender Co, NC, 17 May (Ann Brice) may indicate attempted breeding in that area.

Bridled Tern: This tropical tern species was seen on four of 13 consecutive pelagic trips out of Hatteras, 20 May through 1 Jun (Brian Patteson, et al.).

Least Tern: One on the mudflats at Lake Crabtree, Wake Co, NC, 25 May (Thierry Besançon) was unusual for an inland site not following the passage of a tropical storm.

Gull-billed Tern: An adult at Buckhorn Reservoir, Wilson Co, NC, following the passage of TS Ana, 11 May (Ricky Davis) was a terrific find for a site so far from the coast. At the Rachel Carson Reserve in Carteret Co, NC John Fussell noted a disturbing absence of this species throughout April and May.

Iceland Gull, 02 May 2015, Currituck Co, NC.
Photo by Jeff Lewis.

Caspian Tern: One at Jordan Lake, Chatham Co, NC, 28 Mar (Bob Rybczynski, et al.) was somewhat early for an inland lake. One photographed at Lake Conestee Nature Park, Greenville Co, SC, 7 Apr (Tricia Kyzer) was a new species for that park.

Common Tern: 1000+ at New River Inlet, Onslow Co, NC, 1 May (John DeLuca) was a noteworthy count of this declining species.

Arctic Tern: An adult was photographed in flight over Lake Waccamaw, Columbus Co, NC, after the passage of TS Ana, 12 May (Jeff Beane, Ed Corey, Bob Davis, John Finnegan, Stephanie Horton). Pending review by the NC BRC, this sighting will be only the third of this species at an inland site in NC, the first two also having been storm-related. On the immediate coast, an Arctic Tern photographed on North Topsail Beach, Onslow Co, NC, 16 May (Jamie Adams) and seen again 21 May (Gilbert Grant) was noteworthy. Arctic Terns were seen on ten of 13 consecutive pelagic trips out of Hatteras, Dare Co, NC, 20 May through 1 Jun, with a high count of 15+ made 29 May (Brian Patteson, et al.).

Forster's Tern: Four on Lookout Shoals Lake, Catawba Co, NC, 14 Apr (Dwayne Martin) and three on Salem Lake, Forsyth Co, NC, 20 Apr (Phil Dickinson, et al.) were locally unusual.

Sandwich Tern: Three at the east end of Shackleford Banks, Carteret Co, NC, 22 Mar (John Fussell, et al.) were a little early.

Black Skimmer: 400 at Mason Inlet, New Hanover Co, NC, 11 Apr (Sam Cooper) was a good count for the spring period. One at Buckhorn Reservoir, Wilson Co, NC, following the passage of TS Ana, 11 May (Ricky Davis) was

Arctic Tern, 12 May 2015, Columbus Co, NC.
Photo by Jeff Beane.

a great find.

White-winged Dove: One was photographed in a yard in Myrtle Beach, Horry Co, SC, 11 Apr (Phil & Sharon Turner).

Northern Saw-whet Owl: Six were heard calling along a stretch of the Blue Ridge Parkway near Devil's Courthouse, Transylvania Co, NC, 4 May (Marilyn Westphal).

Black-chinned Hummingbird: The adult male that visited a yard in Lexington Co, SC, during the late winter was last seen 5 Apr (Edith & Marion Clark).

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: Four on Pond Mountain, Ashe Co, NC, were suspected of being on breeding territory 12-13 May (Harry LeGrand, Merrill Lynch).

American Kestrel: One seen kiting over a field at Rich Mountain Gap, approximately 4400 feet above sea level, Watauga Co, NC, 15 May (Chris Kelly, Curtis Smalling) was unusual for that elevation during the breeding season.

Merlin: One seen in the area around Mid-Pines Rd in Wake Co, NC, during the winter, was last seen 21 Mar (Mike Turner).

Monk Parakeet: The pair first reported last year building a nest on a power pole in Northwest, Brunswick Co, NC, had returned to that site by 25 Apr (Greg Massey).

Olive-sided Flycatcher: The only one reported this spring was seen and photographed at Historic Bethabara Park in Forsyth Co, NC, 2 May (Phil Crisp, Phil Dickinson, Kerry Eckhardt).

Yellow-bellied Flycatcher: Two were seen and heard calling at Valle Crucis Community Park, Watauga Co, NC, 26 Apr (Jesse Pope).

Willow Flycatcher: One seen and heard calling in a brushy ditch in Balsam Grove, approximately 2800 feet above sea level, Transylvania Co, NC, 25 May (Chris Kelly) was considered locally unusual.

Least Flycatcher: Two of the better counts were eight along the Cherohala Skyway near Robbinsville, Graham Co, NC, 28 Apr (Simon Thompson) and 13 along the BRP on the border of Haywood Co and Jackson Co, NC, 3 May (Marilyn Westphal).

Eastern Kingbird: A migratory flock of 24 kingbirds along the Tar River in Nash Co, NC, 22 Apr (Ricky Davis) was an interesting observation.

Gray Kingbird: Individuals were seen on Hunting Island, Beaufort Co, SC, 19-20 May (Tammy Hester) and at North River Farms (limited access), Carteret Co, NC, 24 May (Jack Fennell, John Fussell, Steve Howell).

Scissor-tailed Flycatcher: Individuals were photographed at the McKinney Lake State Fish Hatchery in Richmond Co, NC, an adult male, 12 Apr (Jeff Beane) and along Kiker Rd in Anson Co, NC, an adult female, 20 Apr (J. D. Bricken, Will Stuart). A female had returned to the traditional nesting site along Gunter Rd in Greenville Co, SC, by 1 May (Jesse Dale, et

al.). Though the female was observed building a nest atop a utility pole in May (m. obs.), a male flycatcher was not seen in the area during the period.

Warbling Vireo: One observed singing at Lake Lynn, Wake Co, NC, 27 May (Lynn Erla Beegle, et al.) through 31 May (Ricky Davis, m. obs.) was well east of the species' traditional breeding range. A pair had returned to a traditional nesting site at Charles D. Owen Park in Buncombe Co, NC, in May (Simon Thompson).

Horned Lark: One observed singing on the grounds of Wilmington International Airport, New Hanover Co, NC, 30 May (Sam Cooper) was likely breeding in that area. Larks were also likely breeding at North River Farms (limited access), Carteret Co, NC, with six singing males there 13 May (John Fussell).

Tree Swallow: A pair nesting in a bluebird box at McKinney Lake State Fish Hatchery in Richmond Co, NC, in May (Jeff Beane) was unusual for the Sandhills region. Cliff Swallow: Two at Riverbend Park in Catawba Co, NC, 27 Mar (Dwayne Martin) were a little early.

Red-breasted Nuthatch: One in Southern Pines, Moore Co, NC, 5 May (Susan Campbell) was unusual because there was not a major irruption into our region this year.

Sedge Wren: One seen and heard calling at the PotashCorp Wetland Mitigation Site in Beaufort Co, NC, 28 Apr (Sam Cooper) was somewhat late to depart.

Marsh Wren: One seen along the Muddy Creek Greenway in Forsyth Co, NC, 20 May (Phil Dickinson) was late for a site in the Piedmont.

Hermit Thrush: One heard singing in a hardwood forest on Pond Mountain, Ashe Co, NC, 12 May (Harry LeGrand, Merrill Lynch) was interesting because this species' territory is usually in spruce-fir forests.

Louisiana Waterthrush: One heard singing along Ledge Creek in Granville Co, NC, 12 Mar (Harry LeGrand) was early.

Golden-winged Warbler: One observed singing the "bee-bzzzzz" song of a Blue-winged Warbler along Ray Branch in Macon Co, NC, 8 May (Chris Kelly) was unusual.

"Brewster's Warbler": A male was on territory near Stecoah Gap, Graham Co, NC, 7 May and 12 May (Chris Kelly). Kelly notes that a Golden-winged Warbler occupied this same area during the past several breeding seasons.

Bay-breasted Warbler: Because this species is rare along the coast during spring migration, individuals found in Corolla, Currituck Co, NC, a singing male, 17 May (Jeff Lewis); in Wilmington, New Hanover Co, NC, 20 May (Greg Massey); and near Leland, Brunswick Co, NC, a singing male, 21 May (Sam Cooper) were noteworthy.

Yellow-throated Warbler: 18 in the Croatan NF in southeast Jones Co, NC, 15 Mar (Jack Fennell, John Fussell) was a nice count for that somewhat early date.

Black-throated Green Warbler: Three singing males on territory at South Mountains SP, Burke Co, NC, 31 Mar (Dwayne Martin) had returned somewhat early.

Bachman's Sparrow: Three were already singing along Sam Hatcher Rd in the Croatan NF in Carteret Co, NC, on the somewhat early date of 10 Mar (John Fussell). Fussell notes that areas burned the previous year tend to harbor more over-wintering sparrows and thus earlier singing sparrows as well.

Clay-colored Sparrow: At North River Farms (limited access) in Carteret Co, NC, 17 was the peak count for the spring period, 19 Apr, and six remained at that site 26 Apr (John Fussell, et al.).

Lark Sparrow: An adult photographed at Lake Junaluska, Haywood Co, NC, 24 Mar (Bob Olthoff, Connie & Stan Wulkowicz) was a great find for the mountain region and a possible first for that county.

Le Conte's Sparrow: Two were seen at North River Farms (limited access), Carteret Co, NC, 1 Mar (John Fussell, et al.).

Seaside Sparrow: One seen in shrubs along a ditch at North River Farms (limited access). Carteret Co, NC, 31 Mar (John Fussell) was unusual away from a saltwater marsh.

Song Sparrow: Individuals found singing in shrubs along the barrier strand adjacent to the Cedar Island Ferry Terminal, Carteret Co, NC, 14 May and 17 May (John Fussell) were some of the first on territory there since the passage of Hurricane Isabel in 2003. This area is around the southern limit of the breeding range of the Atlantic subspecies.

Lincoln's Sparrow: One was seen at the Clemson Aquaculture Facility, Pickens Co, SC, 1 May (Jack Rogers) through 4 May (m. obs.).

Scarlet Tanager: A brilliant yellow-morph adult male was photographed at the Hooper Cove Overlook along the Cherohala Skyway near Robbinsville, Graham Co, NC, 26 Apr (Simon Thompson). Though orange-morph Scarlet Tanagers are rare-but-regular, yellow-morph adult males are unheard of!

Scarlet Tanager, 26 April 2015,
Graham Co, NC.
Photo by Simon Thompson.

Western Tanager: The male that visited a feeder in Morehead City, Carteret Co, NC, during the winter, remained until 6 Apr (Jane & Maury Wolff), not 24 Feb as previously reported.

Painted Bunting: Three visiting a feeder in Beaufort, Carteret Co, NC, in late March (Rich & Susan Boyd) were somewhat early. An adult male at the Wilson Educational Forest, Wilson Co, NC, 27 Apr (Ann Brice) into summer (m. obs.) was unusual for a site so far from our southern coast.

Dickcissel: The high count at North River Farms (limited access), Carteret Co, NC, was 25 singing birds, 24 May (John Fussell, et al.). Individuals were found at the north end of Pea Island NWR, Dare Co, NC, 3 May (Audrey Whitlock); and at Alligator River NWR, Dare Co, NC, a singing male, 23 May (Jeff Lewis).

Bobolink: Some noteworthy counts were 75 along Sockwell Rd in northeast Guilford Co, NC, 4 May (Nate Swick); 932 at the Savannah Spoil Site (restricted access), Jasper Co, SC, 9 May (Steve Calver); and 35+ in the fields around Warren Wilson College, Buncombe Co, NC, 10 May (Simon Thompson).

Eastern Meadowlark: One at the Unicoi Gap Overlook, approximately 4470 feet above sea level, along the Cherohala Skyway in Graham Co, NC, 19 March (Sheryl Bryan, Katherine Caldwell, Chris Kelly, Allen Ratzlaff) must have been migrating through that heavily forested, high elevation area.

Purple Finch: Individuals at Aunt Sue's Country Corner on SC-11 in Pickens Co, SC, a singing male, 10 May (Dick & Dorothy Rosche) and at Ridge Junction, Yancey Co, NC, 12 May (Marilyn Westphal) were late to depart.

Red Crossbill: Two alongside Cabin Creek Rd in Dehart, Wilkes Co, NC, 3 Apr (Eric Harrold) were noteworthy for the Foothills region.

Common Redpoll: One visited a feeder in West Columbia, Lexington Co, SC, 3-19 Mar (Susan Audé) where it was seen and photographed by many.

Lark Sparrow, 24 March 2015,
Haywood Co, NC.
Photo by Connie and Stan Wulkowicz.

Fifty Years Ago in *The Chat*—September 1965

"Nesting Notes from Connemara Farms", an essay submitted by Margaret Sandburg, eldest of poet Carl Sandburg's three daughters, was included in the Backyard Birding section. Today, Connemara Farms is part of the Carl Sandburg Home National Historic site in Flat Rock, NC. Ms. Sandburg was an active member of the Carolina Bird Club who regularly traveled to attend CBC meetings and periodically submitted reports for publication in *The Chat*.

In her essay, Ms. Sandburg provided details about the trials and tribulations she faced managing her "Bluebird Trail" at the farms. This was at a time when there was a great deal of concern about the serious decline of bluebird populations across the eastern United States. She wrote: "Cornell has certainly started me poking my nose into the private family affairs of quite a few bluebirds and wrens this year. I don't think they minded too much, and I have certainly learned a lot while doing it."

Ms. Sandburg noted her Bluebird Box Trail did "fairly well" that season and she provided many details of various nesting activities. Her favorite box was a rustic wooden box, shaped like a coffee pot, that she had placed near one grove of apple trees. That season the pair in that box raised two broods of young which she kept tabs on while they hatched and fledged. She watched as they practiced "flying along the pasture fence. At least, that's what it looks like. They fly about five feet above the fence, no higher, and after managing to keep in mid-air by beating their wings fast, they drop to the ground. They do this again and again."

Also in this issue, Rhett Chamberlain wrote a special report on the status of the Eastern Bluebirds in the Carolinas. He summarized ten years worth of Spring Bird Count and Christmas Bird Count data. The year 1960 was the low point for the population here and bluebird numbers were slowly increasing as of 1965. Chamberlain noted: "As for recovery, our recent figures point in the right direction but they scarcely go beyond that, and full recovery, if it does come, may be years off."

Ornithologist Wendell P. Smith provided a General Field Note about his discovery of the first Willow Flycatcher (Traill's Flycatcher) nest in North Carolina. He located the nest in "a thick cluster of privet on the edge of a swamp near the old airport at North Wilkesboro". "The nest was a well built cup. It contained four eggs. Three of the eggs hatched on July 3." The birds had bred at that site since 1956, but this was the first time an actual nest with eggs had been found in the state. Smith had previously collected one male and had sent it to Alexander Wetmore at the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History to confirm the species' identification.

CAROLINA BIRD CLUB

www.carolinabirdclub.org

The Carolina Bird Club is a non-profit organization which represents and supports the birding community in the Carolinas through its official website, publications, meetings, workshops, trips, and partnerships, whose mission is

- To promote the observation, enjoyment, and study of birds.
- To provide opportunities for birders to become acquainted, and to share information and experience.
- To maintain well-documented records of birds in the Carolinas.
- To support the protection and conservation of birds and their habitats and foster an appreciation and respect of natural resources.
- To promote educational opportunities in bird and nature study.
- To support research on birds of the Carolinas and their habitats.

Membership is open to all persons interested in the conservation, natural history, and study of wildlife with particular emphasis on birds. Dues, contributions, and bequests to the Club may be deductible from state and federal income and estate taxes. Make checks payable to Carolina Bird Club, Inc. Send checks or correspondence regarding membership or change of address to Headquarters Secretary, or visit : http://www.carolinabirdclub.org/about.html. Dues include $6 for subscription to the *CBC Newsletter* and $7 for subscription to *The Chat*.

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